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TAGS: PREL KDEM CU EZ

SUBJECT: CZECHS ARE THE LONE HOLD-OUT ON EU CUBA POLICY

REF: STATE 52623

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Poloff met with Czech MFA Director of Americas Department Jakub Skalnik on May 4 to discuss the EU's diplomatic strategy on Cuba (reftel). Skalnik lamented that the Czechs find themselves in the unpleasant position of being the "spoiler" at the June review of the EU common policy on Cuba. Pursuant to a proposal by the German presidency, the so-called "June measures" (existing sanctions against the Cuban regime) would be terminated, and a policy of greater openness towards the Cuban regime will be implemented. The Czech are horrified to find themselves the only EU member country opposing this proposal. All the usual pro-democracy supporters (Poland, Netherlands, Slovakia, Hungary, Denmark, the UK, and Sweden) are said to be supporting the proposal.

¶2. (C/NF) Pol-Econ Counselor raised this with Deputy FM Tomas Pojar on May 10. Pojar said the Czechs may veto the German proposal, but intense debate is underway internally on the consequences of taking this principled position. The consequences include: (1) Cuba will likely cut its relations with the Czech Republic completely (thereby jeopardizing Czech government and NGO initiatives to support the democratic opposition), and (2) the Czechs also may become isolated within the EU on other issues of concern, such as Russia and Belarus. The final decision is up to FM Karel Schwarzenberg. He is in Berlin May 11 for a bilateral meeting with the German foreign minister and will discuss the issue.

¶3. (C/NF) Spanish FM Angel Moratinos will be in Prague the week of May 21, both to chair the annual OSCE Economic Dimension conference and then for bilateral consultations. FM Moratinos is bringing his Latin America experts and Cuba is certain to be a major topic of discussion. In light of the on-going internal and external consultations, Pojar could make no prediction on what the FM would decide on a possible veto, except to note that Schwarzenberg is passionate in his support for the Cuban opposition.

GRABER